

UNIVERSITY OF LISBON  
FACULTY OF PSYCHOLOGY



**WORK-FAMILY SEGMENTATION AND BALANCE: THE  
MODERATING ROLE OF FAMILY SUPPORTIVE  
ORGANIZATION PERCEPTIONS**

**Maria Teresa Castro Migueis Pacheco da Fontoura**

**INTEGRATED MASTERS DEGREE IN PSYCHOLOGY**  
**(Area of specialization in Human Resource, Labour and Organizational  
Psychology)**

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**Dissertation supervised by Dr. Vânia Sofia Carvalho**

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## **Abstract**

This study aims to investigate the moderating role of family supportive organization perceptions (FSOP) in the relationship between boundary management by segmentation and work-family balance. Data was collected in a sample of Portuguese employees, accounting for a total of 302 answers and both study's hypothesis were corroborated. The results support the existence of a positive relationship between boundary management by segmentation and work-family balance. Besides this, the results also showed that FSOP have a moderating effect on the studied relationship, acting as a buffer in the influence of boundary management by actual segmentation on the work-family balance.

The obtained results are analysed and discussed, and practical implications are presented in order to contribute to the better understanding of the role of FSOP and on organizations' role in promoting work-family balance in their employee's lives. Limitations and suggestions for future studies are also presented.

**Keywords:** work-family balance, boundary management, segmentation, family supportive organization perceptions

## Resumo

O tópico equilíbrio trabalho-família tem vindo a ganhar grande relevância ao longo dos últimos anos devido a mudanças sociais e mudança nos valores dos trabalhadores (Byron, 2005; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Estes fatores contribuíram para uma mudança nas configurações familiares, afetando a forma como os indivíduos gerem os papéis familiar e o profissional (Chambel & Ribeiro, 2014). Quando se alcança o equilíbrio trabalho-família existem efeitos positivos no domínio familiar, como por exemplo, satisfação conjugal e familiar (Voydanoff, 2005) e no bem-estar geral (Allis & O'Driscoll, 2008). Por este motivo, é importante compreender os mecanismos que promovem o equilíbrio trabalho-família dos indivíduos. Existem várias definições de equilíbrio trabalho-família: neste estudo, utilizamos a de Allen e Kiburz (2012) que considera que o equilíbrio trabalho-família consiste numa avaliação global da compatibilidade do papel profissional e familiar. Desta forma, o equilíbrio trabalho-família é baseado numa avaliação cognitiva dos efeitos, que podem ser positivos, stressantes ou nulos, que estes domínios têm um sobre o outro (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Voydanoff, 2005).

A Teoria de Fronteiras (*Border Theory*) de Clark (2000) tem um papel importante na compreensão das fronteiras que delimitam os papéis do domínio familiar e do profissional, assim como na forma em que os indivíduos transitam entre os dois. Clark (2000) considera o trabalho e a família dois domínios psicológicos distintos, cada um com regras e comportamentos associados diferentes, estando separados por fronteiras. Estas fronteiras podem ser físicas (definem onde ocorre o comportamento adequado a cada domínio), temporais (definem quando ocorre o comportamento adequado a cada domínio) e/ou psicológicas (regras criadas pelo próprio em relação à forma de pensar, comportamentos e emoções adequadas a cada domínio) (Clark, 2000; Allen, Cho, &

Meier, 2014). As fronteiras entre estes domínios podem ser geridas de duas formas: através de integração ou segmentação. Na integração, não existe uma distinção clara entre os domínios; na segmentação, a fronteira entre os domínios é evidente, não existindo sobreposições (Kreiner, 2006; Allen et al., 2014). Por norma, existe uma preferência pela integração ou segmentação, i.e. o grau em que o indivíduo encoraja a fusão dos domínios, ou pelo contrário, os mantém separados (Allen et al., 2014). Contudo, é necessário considerar o estilo de gestão de fronteira realmente utilizado, visto que as preferências dos indivíduos podem nem sempre ser possíveis de executar (Rothbard & Ollier-Malaterre, 2016). Estudos têm concluído que a gestão de fronteiras por segmentação tem melhores resultados positivos para o bem-estar dos indivíduos (Powell & Greenhaus, 2010; Kossek, Ruderman, Braddy, & Hannum, 2012). Assim, a primeira hipótese deste estudo procura compreender se existe uma relação positiva entre a gestão de fronteiras por segmentação e o equilíbrio trabalho-família.

Outros autores defendem que culturas organizacionais de suporte familiar também podem facilitar o equilíbrio entre os domínios (Thompson, Beauvais, & Lyness, 1999; Lyness & Kropf, 2005). Como parte da cultura organizacional, podemos considerar o suporte social, i.e. o grau em que os colaboradores percecionam que o seu bem-estar é valorizado pelo seu local de trabalho (Kossek, Pichler, Bodner, & Hammer, 2011). Um exemplo de suporte social é a organização demonstrar que está preocupada com a capacidade dos seus colaboradores gerirem os dois domínios ou mesmo facilitar este equilíbrio fornecendo recursos diretos (e.g. práticas “amigas da família”) ou indiretos (e.g. fomentar um ambiente de apoio onde os indivíduos não sentem que necessitam de sacrificar um papel para poderem executar o outro) (Kossek et al., 2011). Podemos afirmar que o apoio dado ao domínio familiar é um tipo de suporte social que as organizações fornecem. Quando os indivíduos percecionam a sua organização como

apoio do domínio familiar, existem menos probabilidades de existir conflito trabalho-família e maior possibilidade de experienciar *spillover* positivo do domínio profissional para o familiar (Wayne, Casper, Matthews, & Allen, 2013).

Neste estudo, as percepções de uma cultura de suporte familiar são estudadas à luz da Teoria de Conservação de Recursos de Hobfoll (1989) e são consideradas um recurso, uma vez que promovem flexibilidade, tolerância e suporte às necessidades dos indivíduos (Lapierre et al., 2008). Se aplicarmos o primeiro corolário da COR, que afirma que indivíduos com mais recursos são menos vulneráveis à perda de recursos e mais capazes de ganhar recursos, podemos inferir que indivíduos com um maior suporte familiar obtêm mais ganhos, nomeadamente em termos de equilíbrio trabalho-família. Quando indivíduos sentem suporte ao nível do domínio familiar, ou seja, quando têm percepções elevadas de uma cultura de suporte, é esperado que a relação entre gestão de fronteiras por segmentação e o equilíbrio trabalho-família seja mais forte. A segunda hipótese deste estudo é que a percepção de uma cultura de suporte familiar modera a relação entre a gestão de fronteiras por segmentação e o equilíbrio trabalho-família.

Em relação à metodologia, este estudo está inserido num projeto de investigação mais amplo coordenado pela Professora Maria José Chambel e pela Professora Vânia Carvalho. Um dos objetivos principais passa por compreender de que forma os portugueses estabelecem os limites de fronteira entre o trabalho e a família. Os dados foram recolhidos através de questionário e as medidas utilizadas foram traduzidas para o referido projeto. Obteve-se uma amostra de 302 empregados. Foi realizada uma Análise Fatorial Confirmatória, recorrendo ao *software* AMOS e para o modelo de moderação foi utilizada a macro PROCESS no SPSS (Hayes, 2012).

Ambas as hipóteses deste estudo foram confirmadas. Relativamente à primeira hipótese, concluímos que indivíduos que segmentam o trabalho e a família tendem a ter



um maior equilíbrio entre o trabalho e a família. Em relação à segunda hipótese, a conclusão inovadora deste estudo é que as percepções de uma cultura de suporte funcionam como buffer na relação entre a gestão de fronteiras por segmentação e o equilíbrio trabalho-família. Na prática, significa que independentemente do grau de segmentação, o equilíbrio trabalho-família não é alterado de forma significativa quando os colaboradores têm a percepção de uma cultura de suporte familiar; e, pelo contrário, quando os indivíduos não consideram a organização como tendo uma cultura de suporte familiar, é necessário existir um elevado grau de segmentação entre os dois domínios para ser alcançado o equilíbrio. Logo, quando não existe uma cultura de verdadeiro suporte à família, é preferível que as organizações mantenham as fronteiras fortes entre os domínios de trabalho e família, promovendo a segmentação de forma a ajudar os seus colaboradores a alcançar equilíbrio (Clark, 2002). Esta conclusão realça a importância de uma cultura de suporte.

As implicações práticas decorrentes destes resultados são apresentadas no final do estudo, contribuindo para uma melhor compreensão do papel das percepções de uma cultura de suporte e no papel das organizações em promover equilíbrio trabalho-família nas vidas dos indivíduos. Finalmente, estão também apresentadas limitações do estudo, assim como sugestões para estudos futuros.

## Introduction

The topic of work-family balance has been attracting a great deal of interest over the last few years, and thus it has been the subject of study in different scientific areas (Ribeiro & Pimenta, 2014). This is mainly due to social changes, such as the role of women and their access to the labour market; the fact that both members of a couple have both family and work responsibilities; the increase in the number of single-parent families who are in the labour market; and a change in workers' values (Byron, 2005; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). All the factors cited above contributed to a change in the family configuration, with implications for the way women and men act their roles (Chambel & Ribeiro, 2014). These social changes eventually have implications in terms of reconciling these two dimensions, making it difficult to perform the responsibilities of the different roles. In a study conducted by the Portuguese National Institute of Statistics (*Instituto Nacional de Estatística*) in 2018 on the reconciliation of work and family life, it was declared that 22.4% of the Portuguese population with dependents (under the age of 15) consider that there are constraints in their work that affect the balance between work and family domains; 55.9% of individuals who work on behalf of others with dependents state that it is generally possible to modify their work schedule in order to provide care for their children; and 58.5% mentioned that it is practically impossible to be absent from work for complete days for caregiving responsibilities. The difficulty in reconciling both domains can have negative consequences for individuals, their families, and organizations (Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000). On the contrary, work-family balance has been associated with positive family outcomes, such as, marital and family satisfaction (Voydanoff, 2005) and general well-being (Allis & O'Driscoll, 2008). Thus, it is important to disentangle the mechanisms that promote individuals work-family balance.

Clark's (2000) Border Theory plays an important role in understanding the boundaries that delimit work and family roles and the ways that individual's transition between them. When analysing boundaries, it should be taken into consideration the preference for integration or segmentation, i.e. the degree that an individual encourages the merge of family and work domains or on the other hand, keeps them separate (Allen et al., 2014). Segmentation refers to the degree in which aspects of work and family domains are kept to themselves, with no sort of overlap and contrarily, integration refers to the degree in which there is no longer clear distinction between domains (Kreiner, 2006; Allen et al., 2014). However, we must also consider the actual enactment, since an individual's preferences might not be always possible to enact (Rothbard & Ollier-Malaterre, 2016). A popular question found in work-family balance literature is: what is the most effective boundary management to adopt? (Rothbard & Ollier-Malaterre, 2016; Wepfer, Allen, Brauchli, Jenny, & Bauer, 2018). Empirical studies have shown that boundary management by actual segmentation seem to have the best outcomes: keeping roles separate might make individuals less prone to stress (Linvell, 1987), less prone to negative spillover from one domain to another (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000) and might help individuals focus more on the roles that they are enacting at the moment, reducing possible interruptions (Ashforth, 2000).

Furthermore, Thompson et al. (1999) and Lyness and Kropf (2005) defended that a family supportive organizational culture also makes the balancing of work and family demands and responsibilities easier. These supportive cultures are evaluated by employee's family supportive organization perceptions (FSOP) (Allen, 2001). Employees consider their workplaces family supportive when they feel that their work and family roles are equally respected and they are given time to attend to private and family matters (Wayne et al., 2013). Workers with positive FSOP recognise that they feel

better about themselves and their jobs, and that it is easier to prevent work and family from impacting negatively on one another (Friedman & Johnson, 1997; Thompson et al., 1999). Thompson et al. (1999) also verified that FSOP correlated positively with employees' use of family-friendly practices, particularly flexible work arrangements (e.g. flextime or compressed work weeks) (Cooper, 2013). Since boundary management by actual segmentation is associated with better outcomes, family supportive organizations should support individuals in their domain segmentation. Based on this idea it is expected that, since FSOP encourage the use of family friendly practices that promote segmentation, the relationship between segmentation and work-family balance is enhanced. In this investigation, FSOP are considered a resource in light of Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resources (COR) model, since they help individuals obtain more gains, in particular a better work-family balance. Despite the acknowledgment that workplace family supportive organizations are important for balancing work and personal life, little empirical research has been directed towards examining employee perceptions regarding the extent that a work environment is family-supportive (Friedman & Johnson, 1997). The purpose of this study is precisely to learn more about the role of FSOP in enhancing the relationship between boundary management by segmentation and work-family balance.

This research will contribute to a better understanding of work-family balance, boundary management by actual segmentation and FSOP. In first place, although we know boundary management preferences are associated with work-family balance (e.g. Mellner, Aronsson, & Kecklund, 2015) as far as we know there are no studies on the enactment of segmentation and its impact on the balance between the domains of work and family. In second place, and to the best of our knowledge, FSOP are yet to be studied as a moderator variable between boundary management by segmentation and work-

family balance. For this reason, we can consider this investigation to be an innovative contribution to the literature namely to the border theory by studying the relationship of boundary management by actual segmentation and work-family balance and to the Conservation of Resources model (Hobfoll, 2002) by studying FSOP as a resource that will generate more gains for employees, namely more work-family balance. Besides this, it can also have an original contribution from a practical point of view. At the level of interventions that human resources departments can adopt to help their collaborators reconcile their work and family lives and also work on collaborators perceptions on organization's family supportiveness, promoting a better segmentation behaviour and a work-family balance.

Thus, this study aims to understand to what extent individuals that manage work and family domains by segmentation achieve work-family balance, and how their FSOP enhance this relationship. In this sense, it is intended to analyse 1) the relationship between boundary management by actual segmentation and work-family balance; and 2) if FSOP have a moderating effect in the relationship between boundary management by actual segmentation and work-family balance.

## **Theoretical Background**

### **Work-family Balance**

Work-family balance is thought to be the absence of conflict or the frequency or intensity that work interferes in family life or family in work life (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007). However, work-family balance is conceptually different from conflict and enrichment (Chambel & Ribeiro, 2014). Thus, several theories emerge to understand and analyse work-family balance. Clark defines work-family balance as “satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home, with a minimum of role conflict” (2000, p. 751).

The definition that we follow in this dissertation is the one of Allen and Kiburz (2012) that establishes work-family balance as an overall inter-role assessment of compatibility between work and family roles. In this sense, work-family balance is based on a cognitive appraisal of the effects of work and family domains on each other, which involves the decision regarding whether the experience is positive, stressful, or irrelevant with regard to well-being (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Voydanoff, 2005).

### **Work-family Boundary Dynamics**

Within work-family literature, work-family boundary dynamics has been gaining an increased interest (Allen et al., 2014). Work-family boundary dynamics refers to the socially constructed lines that demark work and family roles, and to the ways that individuals create, maintain and transition between these domains (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000; Clark, 2000; Allen et al., 2014). Boundaries can be defined as “lines of demarcation between domains, defining the point at which domain-relevant behaviours begin or end” (Clark, 2000, p. 756). There are two main theories that play an important role in the understanding of this topic: Nippert-Eng’s (1996) Boundary Theory and Clark’s (2000) Border Theory.

Nippert-Eng developed her theory based on Zerubavel’s (1991) Cognitive Theory of Social Classification, used for understanding the implications of everyday distinctions that people make in their lives (Allen et al., 2014). Individuals make and maintain boundaries to organize their surrounding environment in a simplified way and this process results in the creation of different domains and their respective boundaries (Nippert-Eng, 1996, as cited in Ashforth et al., 2000). Nippert-Eng (1996) applied this theory to understand the meanings that people assign to family and work domains and how they transition between them (Allen et al., 2014).

Contrary to Nippert-Eng's, Clark's theory was designed to bridge the gaps of previous theories, focusing exclusively on work and family domains (Allen et al., 2014). Clark (2000) aims to understand the nature of boundaries between work and family life and how individuals achieve balance between these two. This author considers that work and family are two distinct psychological domains, each having different rules and associated behaviours, as well as contrasting cultures, being separated by boundaries. Clark also suggests that work-family balance can be attained in different ways, depending on factors like the similarity between work and family domains and the strength of the boundaries between them (Allen et al., 2014). Clark's boundaries can take on three forms: a physical form, that define where role-domain behaviour occurs; a temporal form, that determines when role-specific work is done; and a psychological form i.e. rules created by the individual himself, with regard to thinking patterns, behaviour patterns and emotions that are appropriate for one domain but not for the other (Clark, 2000; Allen et al., 2014).

The way people deal with the differences between work and family domains can be represented in a continuum, with integration on one end and segmentation on the other, each representing opposite approaches to work-family balance (Nippert-Eng, 1996). These terms refer to the degree that aspects of one domain are kept separate from the other one (Allen et al., 2014). Integration can be defined as the merging and blending of various aspects of work and home (Kreiner, 2006). At complete integration there no longer exists a distinction between what is one domain and what is the other – individuals think and act the same with all their partners, independently of the domain they're in (Allen et al., 2014). Integration is thought to increase role blurring, complicating boundary creation and maintenance; on the upside, it might facilitate boundary crossing (Ashforth et al., 2000). On the other hand, segmentation refers to the degree in which

aspects of each domain are kept to themselves (Kreiner, 2006). Here, the boundary between both domains is evident, with no sort of overlap (Allen et al., 2014). Segmentation facilitates the creation and maintenance of role boundaries and minimizes role blurring (Ashforth et al., 2000). Nevertheless, most people reside between the two extremes (Allen et al., 2014) and instances of complete segmentation or integration are rare (Ashforth et al., 2000). The ease or difficulty of transitioning between home and work is influenced by the level of integration or segmentation of the domains (Kreiner, 2006). It is important, when studying boundaries, to take into consideration the individual differences in the preference for integration or segmentation – “the degree that an individual favours merging work and family roles versus favours keeping them separate” (Allen et al., 2014, p. 106). However, these preferences cannot sometimes be enacted due to constraints either in the work or family domain (Rothbard & Ollier-Malaterre, 2016). For example, an individual might desire a bigger segmentation between his roles but might not have enough control over his boundaries; or an integrator that is a minority in their organization might feel confined to share personal information if no one else shares it (Rothbard & Ollier-Malaterre, 2016). This way, we can consider individual’s preference for integration/segmentation and the actual ways that people integrate or segment their lives.

Research shows that boundary management by actual segmentation has better outcomes. Linvell (1987) considers that keeping roles separate, i.e. segmenting work and family domains, might make individuals less prone to depression and stress. On the other hand, Edwards and Rothbard (2000) studied that segmentation can buffer negative emotions and experiences from one domain to the other, preventing negative *spillover*. According to Ashforth et al. (2000), individuals in segmented roles tend to focus more on the salient role that they are currently performing, diminishing interruptions. Finally,



segmentation is associated with less work-family conflict (Powell & Greenhaus, 2010; Kossek et al., 2012) and less family-work conflict (Kossek et al., 2012).

As previously stated, work-family balance is supported on a cognitive appraisal on the effects that work and family domains have on one another. Additionally, as also previously mentioned (e.g. Powell & Greenhaus, 2010; Kossek et al., 2012), the effect that work domains have on family ones seem to be positive. So, based on the evidence presented above, it is expected that there is a positive relationship between the segmentation behaviour of work and family domains and work-family balance. Thus, the following hypothesis is formulated:

**1<sup>st</sup> hypothesis (H1):** Boundary management by segmentation behaviour is positively related with work-family balance.

## **Organizational Culture**

Schein (2010) defines organizational culture as “a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems” (Schein, 1992, p. 18). Schein considers that organizational culture is made up of three different levels: artefacts, beliefs and values and basic underlying assumptions. Artefacts are everything a stranger to a group can identify in unfamiliar culture, such as the language, patterns of behaviour, products and technology, clothing, emotional displays, published list of values and observable rituals (Schein, 2010). They correspond to the observable and more superficial part of a group’s culture (Neves, 2000). However, artefacts might be ambiguous and difficult to decipher (Gagliardi, 1900, as cited in Schein, 2010) so it may be dangerous to make assumptions from artefacts alone

(Schein, 2010). Values and beliefs are propagated by leaders and/or founders of a group and define what is important for the group, guiding its action (Schein, 2010). Those who fail to accept these beliefs and values run the risk of being thrown out of the group (Schein, 2010). When analysing promoted beliefs and values, Schein (2010) states that it is important to discriminate the ones that are congruent with the organization's ideology and guide its action and those that are only ambitions for the future. For example, an organization may state that the employees well-being is one of their main concerns and even develop policies to promote an easier balance between domains, but higher figures in the hierarchy, such as directors and managers, might not approve, and even judge their subordinates that take advantage of these policies. In this case, the promoted beliefs and values reflect the desired behaviour, but are not reflected in observed behaviour (Schein, 2010). Basic underlying assumptions guide behaviour, telling group members how they should perceive, think and feel (Argryis & Schon, 1974, as cited in Schein, 2010). They tend to be nonconfrontable and nondebatable (Schein, 2010). Culture at this level provides group members with a sense of identity (Schein, 2010).

### **Family Supportive Organization Perceptions**

As part of organizational culture, workplace social support can be defined as the degree to which employees perceive that their well-being is valued and esteemed by their workplace; an example the workplace caring about an employee's ability to perform both work and family roles successfully or facilitating a helpful environment by providing direct and indirect work-family resources (Kossek et al., 2011). Indirect support can be, for instance, fostering a family supportive environment where individual's do not feel like they have to sacrifice their family role in order to be able to perform effectively their work role; on the other hand, direct support can through the provision of family-friendly practices for example (Kossek et al., 2011). We can therefore consider family

supportiveness as a type of social support that organizations provide. The workplace social support applied to work and family dynamics is evaluated by family supportive organization perceptions (FSOP), that are, “global perceptions that employees form regarding the extent to which the organization is family-supportive” (Allen, 2001, p. 416). In other words, this concerns the perceptions that employees have relatively to the way organizations support their family roles, give them space to talk about their personal issues at work, give them time to attend to family and private matters and the opportunity to perform both roles (Wayne et al., 2013). When employees perceive their workplace as being family supportive, they are less likely to experience work-family conflict and more likely to experience positive gains that spill from the work domain to the family one (Wayne et al., 2013).

In this study, Hobfoll's Conservation of Resources (COR) model (1989) will be used to framework FSOP. This model was developed based on several stress theories and its main idea is that individuals strive to acquire and maintain resources and that the threat or actual loss of resources is a stressor (Hobfoll, 1989). Resources are defined as “objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies that are valued by the individual or that serve as a means for attainment of these objects, personal characteristics, conditions or energies” (Hobfoll, 1989, p. 516). The COR model proposes that interrole conflict is a factor that leads to stress since resources are lost whilst juggling both work and family responsibilities (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999). Considering this model, FSOP will be considered a resource, since they promote flexibility, tolerance, and support for individual's needs (Lapierre et al., 2008). When studying FSOP as a resource, we can apply the first corollary of the COR model, that states that “Those with greater resources are less vulnerable to resource loss and more capable of resource gains (...) individuals and organizations who lack resources are more vulnerable to resource loss and less

capable of resource gain” (Hobfoll, Halbesleben, Neveu, & Westman, 2018, p. 106). If we consider that individuals strive to preserve boundary management by actual segmentation and work-family balance, FSOP is a resource that will make individuals more capable of resource gains, enhancing the relationship between boundary management by segmentation and work-family balance.

A way organizations can demonstrate their concern with their worker’s well-being and help them cope with this tricky balance between work and family is by implementing family friendly programmes and policies (Allen, 2001; Clark, 2001; Andreassi & Thompson, 2008; Chambel & Ribeiro, 2014). However, studies have verified that family friendly practices are only effective when individuals perceive their organizations as being family supportive. Shockley and Allen (2007) stated that FSOP positively correlate with the number of flexible policies offered. And Thompson et al. (1999) found that FSOP correlated positively with employees’ actual use of family-friendly practices, particularly flexible work arrangements, such as flextime or compressed work weeks (Cooper, 2013). So, workplace support shows to be more relevant in enhancing employee attitudes than formal policies (Butts, Casper, & Wang, 2013). For this reason, we can consider FSOP as a crucial and indispensable resource for individuals to achieve a balance between work and family.

As previously mentioned, it is expected that individuals who separate professional and personal domains will find it easier to achieve balance. Lyness and Kropf (2005) concluded in their study that work-family supportive cultures are also related to work-family balance. Taking this into account, truly family supportive organizations should encourage individuals to segment these domains to achieve the greatest balance possible. This encouragement can be through making available practices that allow segmentation, such as flex-time or condensed work weeks (Kossek & Lambert, 2005). So, when

individuals do not feel concerned or worried about using family friendly practices and when they feel supported by their organization, it is expected that the relationship between boundary management by actual segmentation and work-family balance will be stronger. Based on the literature review and the evidence presented above, FSOP are expected to moderate the relationship between boundary management by segmentation and work-family balance:

**2<sup>nd</sup> hypothesis (H2):** The relationship between management by segmentation and work-family balance is moderated by family supportive organization perceptions.

## **Method**

### **Procedure**

The data of this study was carried out in the context of a broader research project, coordinated by Professor Maria José Chambel and Professor Vânia Sofia Carvalho, on the topic work-family balance. Among others, this project aims to understand how the Portuguese set boundaries between work and family.

The ethics committee of the Faculty of Psychology approved this research and the master's students of the Faculty of Psychology from the University of Lisbon participated in the data collection. The questionnaires were distributed in paper and collected by the students in a sealed envelope. All participants were guaranteed the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses. The participants had to fulfil the following criteria: work in an organization (i.e. cannot be self-employed), have a dependent child under the age of 20 living in their home and work at least 20 hours a week. Besides this, the number of men and women had to be balanced, and the preferential recruitment was outside of the region of Lisbon. For the present study, only some variables from the original study were used.

## Sample

The sample obtained consists of a total of 302 employees, 143 male (47.4%) and 159 female (52.6%). As far as the age group, the participants are between 24 and 63 years of age, the average age being 44.11 years. Regarding the marital status of the participants, 34 (11%) are single or separated and 267 (88.4%) are married or cohabiting.

## Measures

The previously validated scales that measured the variables under study, as well as their metrological characteristics, will be presented below. It is important to note that the scales were translated into Portuguese and then a translator was asked to provide a back translation of the Portuguese version into English (Brislin, 1970).

**Independent variable. Boundary management** was measured using a shortened version (six items instead of eight) of Powell and Greenhaus' (2009) Boundary Management: Segmentation/Integration scale. The items were answered on a five-point Likert scale (1 = *Strongly disagree* to 5 = *Strongly agree*). Some examples of the items are: "I think about non-work issues while I am at work.", "I think about work while I'm at home." and "I leave work behind when I go home.". This scale showed an acceptable internal consistency index ( $\alpha=.72$ ).

**Dependent variable. Work-family balance** was measured with a shortened version (four items instead of five) based on Allen and Kiburz's (2012) and Greenhaus, Ziegert and Allen's (2012) work-family balance instruments. Participants were asked to rate each on a five-point Likert scale (1 = *Strongly disagree* to 5 = *Strongly agree*). Some examples of items are "I am able to balance the demands of my work and the demands of my family." and "I balance my work and family responsibilities so that one does

not upset the other.”. This scale showed a good internal consistency index ( $\alpha=.79$ ). We can assume that the higher the participant’s answers, the better work-family balance.

**Moderator variable. Family supportive organization perceptions** was measured using the short version of Wayne, Casper, Matthews and Allen (2013), made up of 5 items. Participants were scored on a five-point scale (1 = *Strongly disagree* to 5 = *Strongly agree*). Participants were instructed “Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements representing your organization's philosophy or beliefs? Remember that these are not your personal beliefs - but refer to what you believe your organization's philosophy to be.”. Some examples of items used are: " The ideal employee is the one who is available 24 hours a day.”, “It is assumed that the most productive employees are those who put their work before their family life.”; “Individuals who take time off to attend to personal matters are not committed to their work.”. This scale’s internal consistency index is acceptable ( $\alpha=.65$ ). The higher the participant’s answers, the better perception they have of their organization’s family support.

**Control variables.** Investigation has shown that demographical variables might influence work-family balance. Vallen and Rande (2002) suggest that demographical variables, such as gender and civil status may influence work-family balance. Kossek et al. (1999) speculated that gender and individual’s civil status may influence their choice to either segment or integrate. Thus, the effect of the variables sex and civil status were controlled. **Sex** was measured as a dummy variable (0 = man; 1 = woman) and so was **Civil Status** (0 = single or separated; 1 = married or cohabiting).

## Statistical Analysis

Statistical processing of data was carried out through the IBM SPSS - Statistical Package for Social Sciences programs (Windows, 26.0 software), IBM SPSS AMOS - Analysis of Moment Structures (Windows, 26.0 software) and SPSS Process Tool (Hayes, 2012).

The first moment of statistical analysis was the confirmatory factor analysis. This analysis was done using SPSS AMOS and is performed to determine the degree to which the items used consistently measure the latent variables. In first place, the theoretical model was tested with three latent variables (work-family balance, FSOP and boundary management by segmentation). The following adjustment indices were analysed: *Root Mean Square Error of Approximation* (RMSEA), *Incremental Fit Index* (IFI), and *Comparative Fit Index* (CFI). According to Byrne (2016) RMSEA values of 0.08 or under and IFI, and CFI values of 0.09 or over indicate a good fit to the model. Afterwards, the single factor model was tested. This model assumes that observable variables are all explained by the same latent variable. In order to discover the best fit to the data, both models were compared based on the *Chi-square tests* ( $\chi^2$ ) and on the additional adjustment indexes, RMSEA, IFI, and CFI.

In second place, using SPSS, the sample was characterised, regarding gender, age and civil status. Afterwards, the descriptive analysis of the measuring instruments was done, obtaining the mean values, standard deviations, and correlations between the variables.

Subsequently, to perform the hypothesis test and in order to analyse the nature of the relationship between the variables, the *SPSS Process tool* model 1 – simple moderation (Hayes, 2012) was used. Through this tool it was possible to analyse the effect



of FSOP moderation on the relationship between boundary management by segmentation and work family balance.

## Results

### Confirmatory Factor Analysis

This theoretical model presents three latent variables: work-family balance, family supportive organization perceptions and boundary management by segmentation. It revealed an adequate fit for the observed indexes:  $\chi^2(84) = 165.8, p < .01$ ; IFI = .95; CFI = .95; RMSEA = .57. In a second moment, this model was compared with the single factor model. Contrary to the theoretical model, the single factor model did not reveal a good fit to the data:  $\chi^2(87) = 878.09, p < .01$ ; IFI = .47; CFI = .46; RMSEA = .17. Since the difference between both models is significative ( $\Delta\chi^2(3) = 712.29, p < .01$ ), it can be concluded that the data are best explained when the three variables are analysed as distinct theoretical constructs.

Table 1

#### *Confirmatory Factor Analysis*

Model	$\chi^2$	$\Delta\chi^2$	IFI	CFI	RMSEA
Theoretical Model	$\chi^2(84) = 165.8$	Comparison with the Theoretical Model	.95	.95	.57
Single Factor Model	$\chi^2(87) = 878.09$	$\Delta\chi^2(3) = 712.29$	.47	.46	.17

Note:  $p < .01$ .

## Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Table 2

*Means, Standard Deviations (SD) and Correlation Coefficients (r) between Variables*

	Mean	SD	r				
			1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. Sex <sup>(a)</sup>	-	-					
2. Civil Status <sup>(b)</sup>	-	-	-.13*				
3. WFB	3.53	.69	.004	.005			
4. FSOP	3.19	.71	-.04	-.017	.227*		
5. BMS	3.20	.56	.03	.04	.21**	-.03	

*Notes:* WFB = Work-family balance; FSOP = Family Supportive Organization Perceptions; BMS = Boundary Management by actual Segmentation; \*\*. Correlation is significant at the .01 level; \*. Correlation is significant at the .05 level; (a) dummy variable (0 = man; 1 = woman); (b) dummy variable (0 = single or separated; 1 = married or cohabiting).

Table 2 shows the mean, standard deviation (SD) and correlations (r) between the variables under study. The employees seem to have a sense of moderate work-family balance ( $M = 3.53$ ;  $SD = .69$ ), where 3 equals *neither agree nor disagree* and 4 equals *agree*. Regarding employee's family supportive organization perceptions, the participants answers seem to indicate that their perception of support is moderate ( $M = 3.19$ ,  $SD = .71$ ). Finally, regarding segmentation values, employees also have a sense of moderate levels of segmentation ( $M = 3.20$ ,  $SD = .56$ ).

By analysing Table 2, it is possible to verify that there are some significant relationships among the variables under study. As expected, there is a significant positive relationship between FSOP and WFB ( $r = .23$ ,  $p < .05$ ); and boundary management by actual segmentation and WFB ( $r = .21$ ,  $p < .01$ ). It is also possible to infer that the control variables (sex and civil status) do not have any significant relationship with the variables studied. This means that, in the present sample, individual's sex and civil status do not influence work-family balance, FSOP and segmentation.

## Hypothesis Testing

In order to proceed to the hypothesis test, Process's model 1 was used, which tests a simple moderation model. This model was used to understand the moderating role of FSOP in the relationship between boundary management by segmentation and work-family balance. The model presents an  $R^2 = .12$ , demonstrating that 12% of the variance of the data reports to these predictors, that is, work-family balance is explained in 12% by our model.

Table 3

*Moderation and Effect Analysis between Variables*

	WFB ( $R^2 = .12$ , $P < .001$ )			
	$\beta$	SE	$t$	$p$
BMS	.29	.07	4.26	< .001
FSOP	.21	.05	4.02	< .001
BMS * FSOP	-.27	.10	-.2.66	.008

*Note:* WFB = Work-family balance; FSOP = Family Supportive Organization Perceptions; BMS = Boundary Management by actual Segmentation.

As for the first hypothesis (H1), that analyses the existence of a positive relationship between boundary management by segmentation and work-family balance, it is supported. There is a positive and significant relationship between segmentation and work-family balance ( $\beta = .29$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Besides the study's hypothesis, we can also observe that FSOP has a positive and significant relationship with work-family balance ( $\beta = .21$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This means that segmentation and FSOP are important to explain work-family balance.

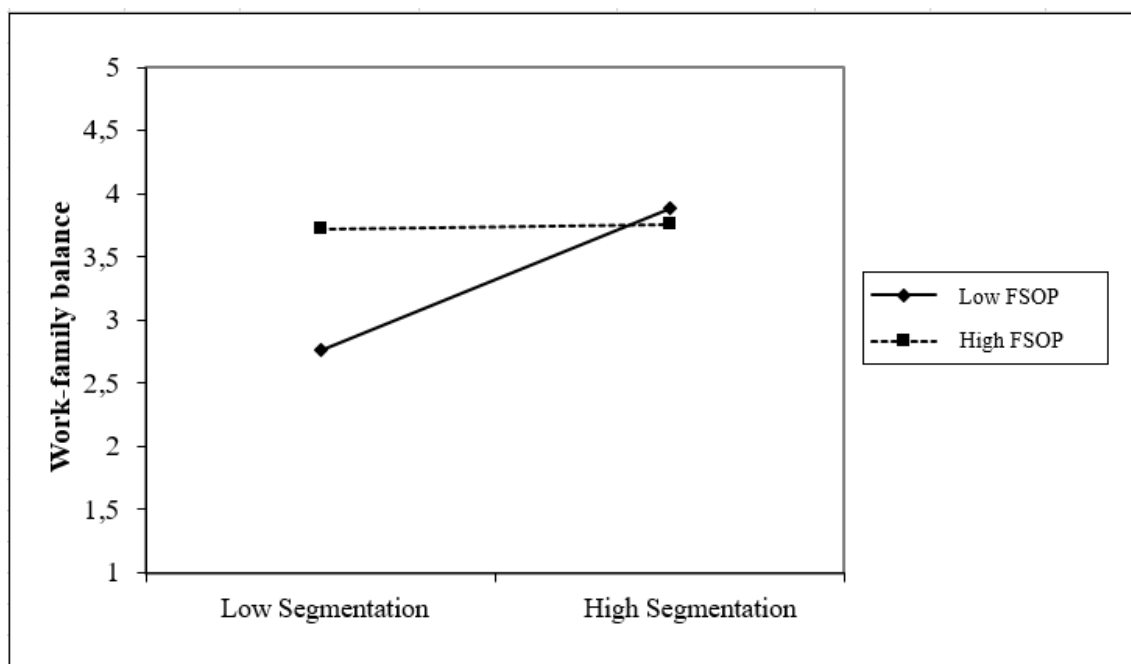
In regard to the second hypothesis (H2), which seeks to understand the interaction of the FSOP in the relationship between segmentation and the work-family balance, it is possible to state that it is also supported ( $B = -.27$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The interaction between FSOP and boundary management by actual segmentation has a positive statistical significance,

that is, the relationship between boundary management by actual segmentation and work-family balance is moderated by FSOP.

To understand the direction of this moderation an interaction plotter tool in Microsoft Excel was used (Figure 1). In figure 1 it is possible to observe the interaction of FSOP's different levels (low FSOP and high FSOP) and actual segmentation's influence on work-family balance. In a situation where FSOP is high, the degree of segmentation, either low or high, has no influence on work-family balance. On the contrary, when FSOP is low, it is necessary that the degree of segmentation is also high in order to reach work-family balance. In other words, FSOP is an important variable that strongly moderates this relationship. It does not increase the effect of boundary management by actual segmentation on work-family balance, on the contrary, it makes its effect insignificant. Given these results, we can conclude that FSOP acts as a buffer in the relationship of boundary management by segmentation on the work-family balance.

Figure 1

*Interaction between Family Supportive Organization Perceptions and Boundary Management by Segmentation and their Effect on Work-Family Balance*



## **Discussion**

The present investigation analysed the relationship between boundary management by segmentation and work-family balance, and the moderating role of FSOP in this relationship. As expected, results suggest that boundary management by actual segmentation is positively related with work-family balance. The moderating role of FSOP in the relationship between these variables was also supported, and it was observed that when there is a positive perception of FSOP, the influence of boundary management by actual segmentation on work-family balance is no longer significant.

Firstly, as expected, there is a positive and significative relationship between boundary management by segmentation and work-family balance. This investigation is in line with previous studies on this topic (e.g. Mellner et al., 2015; Wepfer et al., 2018). Given this evidence, it can be stated that boundary management by actual segmentation seems to be a way to promote a balance between the two domains that individuals struggle to balance throughout their lives. Kreiner (2006) highlights that organizational environment has influence on the transitioning between roles, depending on the degree of which it promotes segmentation or integration. This view reinforces the importance of human resource management in promoting segmentation between work and family with programmes and policies. Along the same line, Koch and Binnewies (2015) analyse boundary management from a recovery perspective, arguing that segmentation between work and family domains is critical to recover from the stress produced in the attempt to achieve this balance. However, recovery only occurs in the absence of work stressors (Meijman & Mulder, 1998) and is essential to segment both domains, being considered valuable for well-being and health (Sonnentag & Bayer, 2005). Finally, and in accordance with Clark's (2000) Border Theory, boundary management by segmentation is a way to

reach work-family balance “people who segment work and home have created a synergy between them exactly because they are separate and different” (Clark, 2000, p. 755).

The second and innovative conclusion was that the positive relationship of boundary management by actual segmentation and work-family balance is attenuated by the effect of FSOP. Regardless of the degree of segmentation between work and family, i.e. being high or low, the degree of work-family balance does not change significantly when employees feel that their organization is family supportive. On the other hand, when collaborators perceive the organization as not family supportive, it is important to exist a high degree of segmentation between both domains to achieve work-family balance. This underlines the above-stated idea that family supportive cultural perceptions are crucial (Thompson et al., 1999; Allen, 2001). Thus, organizations should not implement policies and practices that are not in accordance with their culture (Clark, 2000), and that if organizations do not want to commit to changes to their culture and values, it is better to maintain strong boundaries to help employees to maintain the balance. This result is in accordance with Clark's (2002) study in which was concluded that it is preferable that the barriers between the domains of work and family be kept strong in both directions, promoting segmentation, when organizations do not have a supporting culture for the family of their employees. This conclusion once again stresses the weight of existing a family supportive work environment. When employees feel like they are supported, their boundary management enactment does not influence in a relevant way their work-family balance.

Previously, we used Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resources model to framework family supportive organization perceptions. FSOP were considered a resource since, as previously mentioned, they promote among other things, support for individuals' needs (Lapierre et al., 2008). It was verified that FSOP acted as a buffer on the effect that

segmentation has on work-family balance. This highlights the importance of this contextual resource. It is so relevant that within its presence, segmentation does not contribute in the expected way to work-family balance. This is in agreement with the first corollary of COR (Hobfoll et al., 2018) if we consider that FSOP are a resource and that individuals who lack resources, in this case, a perception of support, are more vulnerable to loss of resources and less able to gain resources.

Although it was not one of the hypotheses of this study, a positive and significant relationship between FSOP and work-family balance was verified, in concordance with Lyness and Kropf's study where they proved that "a supportive work-family culture, is important for helping employees to balance their work and family responsibilities" (2005, p. 34).

### **Study Limitations and Future Studies**

This study contains several limitations. In first place, being a cross-sectional study, it only provides information on the nature (whether positive or negative) of the variables; it is not possible to establish cause-and-effect relationships between the studied variables. Second, the fact that the sample is exclusively made up of Portuguese employees, may make it harder for the results to be generalised, because of the potential cultural differences in managing work and family roles between countries. Widening the range to other populations, conducting an international research, for example, could enrich research in this area. Thirdly, the fact that all the data of this study was self-reported, even though participants anonymity was guaranteed, can influence the social desirability effect on the respondents.

In a future study, it could be interesting to analyse the impact of other demographic variables as control variables, such as parenthood (i.e. number of children and children's

age) on employees FSOP and work-family balance, since these demographic variables seem to have impact on individuals work-family balance (Byron, 2005).

Finally, it could also be interesting to explore the moderating role of other variables in the relationship between boundary management by actual segmentation and work-family balance, namely the role of family-supportive supervisors. Allen (2001) disentangles perceptions of managerial support from perceptions of organizational support, since an employee can perceive his/her organization as being family supportive, despite perceiving his/her supervisor as not or vice-versa. A future investigation could study in what way the role of family-supportive supervisors moderates the relationship between boundary management by actual segmentation and work-family balance

### **Practical Implications**

Despite the previously mentioned limitations, this study has important practical implications for human resource management in organizations.

In first place, it was verified that segmentation is the boundary management strategy that leads best relates to work-family balance. So, organizations that value their collaborators work-family balance can use boundary work tactics to help these individuals' segment both domains (Kreiner, Hollensbe, & Sheep, 2009). We point out temporal and communicative tactics. Temporal tactics are regarding to when and how much time individuals devote to their jobs (Kreiner et al., 2009). The strategies that HR departments can encourage their collaborators to enact are related with controlling work time, for example: incentivizing individuals to schedule family time; giving employees the opportunity to bank hours from one domain to another (e.g. if an individual has to work later on a day, he/she can take it out of work time on another day); or being firm about working hours and working days (e.g. not booking meetings that will end after the



work day, not sending e-mails at late hours, not contacting employees on weekends) (Kreiner et al., 2009). The other tactic we consider essential is communication. Communication tactics are particularly important because they establish individual's expectations of how their organization them to manage their work family boundaries (Kreiner et al., 2009). This can happen when organizations negotiate with their employees their working schedule and its flexibility, for instance. Besides these strategies , HR departments can also implement family friendly practices that promote segmentation, such as: flextime, where the employee is free to decide his/her or her working schedule, i.e. starting/ending their workday earlier or later than usual; condensed work weeks/compressed hours, where individuals work fewer hours on some days and longer on other days; or part-time work, that allows employees to maintain their jobs, working less than 30 hours a week (Thompson et al., 1999; Sutton & Noe, 2005).

However, the most relevant aspect verified was the importance of the existence of a supporting culture for employees' families. The role of family supportive organization perceptions as a buffer in the relationship between boundary management by segmentation and work-family balance emphasizes the need of a culture that truly supports their collaborators family domain. What this means is that if an organization is genuinely supportive to its employee's family life, there is no need to implement segmentation or on the other hand, integration strategies. The following factors should be addressed by HR departments in order to work on their employees' perception of the organization's family support culture.

Firstly, managerial support appears to be an important aspect. This regards the extent to which supervisors are supportive and empathetic to employee's family responsibilities and their desire to seek balance between both domains (Allen, 2001). Supervisors play an important role since they reinforce the cultural norms that

compromise their subordinate's efforts to integrate work and family life (Thompson et al., 1999). In this line, and as previously mentioned, it is also necessary to exist openness and opportunities for open communication between managers and their subordinates. Thirdly, organizations should strive to demonstrate that they are sympathetic with their employee's responsibilities beyond work. If an organization rewards employee that spends long hours at work or is always available, employees will feel like they might prejudice their career if they are not available 24/7 (Andreassi & Thompson, 2008). In last place, Butts et al. (2013), amongst others, verified in their study that the availability of family supportive practices may be a necessary condition for employees to perceive an organization as family supportive. And since HR departments can transmit that they value and care about their employees through HR practices (Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997), we likewise suggest some practices that organizations can implement to build a culture of family supportiveness. Here, we can distinguish between policies, benefits, and services (Veiga, Baldrige, & Eddleston, 2004). HR departments can implement family-friendly policies, where they address work-family conflicts by offering flexibility concerning how, when and where work is performed (e.g. flextime, part-time work, condensed work weeks/compressed hours, parental/family leaves) (Bagraim, 2007). On the other hand, HR departments can also offer their employees benefits, that protect them from losses of earnings resulting from family commitments, such as medical aid, paid maternity/paternity leaves, paid vacation (Bagraim, 2007). In last place, HR departments can also provide services to help employees cope with the difficulties and strain of work-family conflicts, like childcare facilities or counselling (Bagraim, 2007).

In sum, to reach work-family balance, what genuinely matters is that employees feel that their family domain is supported by their organization.

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